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THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

H. G. WELLS

SADDLEBACK Classics



The War of the Worlds

H. G. WELLS

ADAPTED BY

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BOOK 1
THE COMING OF THE MARTIANS

1 **The Eve of the War**

The nineteenth century was in its last years. At that time, no one would have believed he was being watched by beings of much greater intelligence. But the people of Earth *were* being studied—just as someone with a microscope might study creatures swarming in a drop of water!

All over this globe, people were still going about their affairs comfortably. (Is it not also possible that the creatures studied under our microscopes do the same?) Yet at that time, no one gave a thought to the older worlds of space as a source of danger.

A few earthly men fancied there might be

people on Mars. Surely, though, they were inferior. Yet, across the gulf of space, other minds were at work. And those minds were to ours as ours are to beasts. They looked at our planet with cold, jealous eyes. They carefully drew plans against us. The great downfall came in the twentieth century.

The planet Mars, I remind the reader, revolves about the sun at a distance of about 140 million miles. The light and heat it receives from the sun are barely half of that received by Earth. Mars is believed to be older than our world. It has air and water and all that is necessary to support life.

How could earthly men be so vain and self-important? Yet, until the very end of the nineteenth century, this was the case. No one dreamed that intelligent life might have developed on that distant planet.

In fact, a great cooling has occurred on Mars. Now the midday temperature barely approaches that of our coldest winter. This has become a problem for the inhabitants. Facing this problem has sharpened their minds and increased their powers. And it has

hardened their hearts. That's why they look across space with instruments and knowledge such as we have scarcely imagined. They see a morning star of hope. It is our own warmer planet—green with vegetation and gray with water. Martians have long been studying our broad stretches of populated country and vast, navy-crowded seas.

And we men, the creatures who live on this earth, must seem to them as lowly as monkeys seem to us. As their planet slowly cools, their population is shrinking—while this world is still crowded with life! In their eyes, however, it is crowded only by what they regard as inferior animals. They *must* carry warfare sunward! It is their only possible escape from the destruction that creeps toward them.

Before we judge the Martians too harshly, we must remember our own history. Our species has caused much cruel destruction. We've destroyed not only animals such as the bison and the dodo, but other human races. How could we object if the Martians made war in the same way?

The Martians seem to have much greater

mathematical learning than we do. They have figured out their journey carefully. If we'd had better instruments, we might have seen the trouble brewing far back in the nineteenth century. In 1894, when Mars was positioned closest to the earth, a great light was spotted on the planet. After that, whenever the planet came near us, strange sights were seen again. The Martians must have been getting ready.

Newspapers never made much of these sights. Our world went on—unaware of the grave dangers threatening the human race. I, too, would not have heard about the events—had I not met Ogilvy. The well-known astronomer invited me to join him in viewing the red planet.

Ogilvy was excited. He took me to the telescope and showed me three faint points of light. They were three tiny stars in the darkness of empty space. Each was flying swiftly and steadily across that great distance, drawing nearer to us every minute. At the time, I didn't dream that this *thing* hurtling through space was bringing struggle, misery, and death to our planet. No one on Earth had

even dreamed of what was coming our way!

That night, as I watched, there was a jetting out of gas from the distant planet. It looked like a flash of red. Neither Ogilvy nor I suspected the meaning of that gleam. In the darkness below lay the towns and all their hundreds of people, sleeping in peace.

Ogilvy laughed at the idea that Mars had inhabitants who were signaling us. His idea was that a heavy shower of meteorites might be falling on the planet. Or perhaps a huge volcano was erupting. He made a point of saying how unlikely it was that life had formed on the nearby planet.

“The chances of manlike creatures on Mars are more than a million to one,” he told me confidently.

Hundreds of people saw the flame that night. They saw it again the night after, and for eight more nights. Why the red flashes stopped after the tenth night, no one on Earth has tried to explain.

Then the daily papers finally woke up to the flashes. Notes appeared here, there, and everywhere about volcanoes on Mars. And all

the while, unsuspected, those missiles the Martians had fired at us were steadily headed earthward. At a pace of many miles a second, they were rushing through the empty gulf of space. Hour by hour and day by day they were coming nearer and nearer.

Now—after everything that's happened—it seems amazing. With that terrible fate hanging over us, we were going about our daily concerns as usual. For my own part, I was busy learning to ride a bicycle. At night I was working on a series of papers about my ideas of right and wrong.

One night (the first missile must have been very close) I went for a starlit walk with my wife. I pointed out Mars, an especially bright dot of light. The temperature was pleasantly warm. Lights twinkled out in the upper windows of houses as people were going to bed. The sound of trains rumbled from the railway station. Everything seemed so safe and peaceful then.

2 **The Falling Star**

Then came the night of the first falling star. High in the sky, a line of flames rushed over the town of Winchester. Hundreds must have seen it. No doubt they took it for an ordinary falling star.

I was at home at that hour, writing in my study. This strangest of all things that ever came to Earth must have fallen while I was sitting there. Some say it traveled with a hissing sound. I myself heard nothing of that. Many thought that another meteorite had crashed to earth. No one seems to have looked for the fallen mass that night.

But Ogilvy had seen the shooting star. Early the next morning, he rose with the idea of finding it. And find it he did, soon after dawn. The enormous hole was not far from the sand pits. Sand and gravel had been

hurled over the heath, forming huge heaps. The heather was on fire. A thin, blue smoke rose against the dawn.

The *thing* itself lay almost buried in the sand. The part that was uncovered looked like a huge cylinder, some 30 yards or so around. When Ogilvy approached the mass, he heard a stirring noise within the cylinder.

Ogilvy remained at the edge of the big pit the *thing* had made. He stared at its strange shape and color. The early morning was wonderfully still, and the sun was already warm. He couldn't recall hearing any birds that morning. The only sounds were faint movements from within the cylinder.

Then he noticed with a start that pieces were falling off the round edge of one end! The top of the cylinder was very slowly turning on its body. Something within the cylinder was unscrewing the top!

"Good heavens!" Ogilvy gasped. "There's someone—or something—inside. It must be half roasted to death and trying to escape!"

Only then did he link the *thing* with the flash upon Mars.

The still-glowing metal was too hot to touch. Ogilvy turned and ran wildly to the town of Woking. The time must have been somewhere around six o'clock.

"It's something more than a meteorite!" Ogilvy told a friend in town. He carefully described what he had seen. His astounded friend telegraphed the news to London.

By eight o'clock a number of boys and out-of-work men had already started for the common. Everyone wanted to see the "dead men from Mars." That was the form the story had taken. I first heard the story about nine when I went out to get my paper. Of course, I was startled. I lost no time in crossing the bridge to the sand pits.

There I found a little crowd standing around the huge hole. Four or five boys sat on the edge of the pit, dangling their feet and laughing. Until I stopped them, they were throwing stones at the giant mass.

I noted the gray scale on the *thing*. I saw the yellowish-white metal that gleamed in the crack between the lid and the cylinder. It was an odd color. It became quite clear to me that

the *thing* had come from the planet Mars. I judged, however, that it was not likely to hold a living creature. For a while, nothing more seemed to be happening. So I walked back, deep in thought, to my home in Maybury.

By afternoon the crowd at the pit had grown. The newspapers had startled London with huge headlines:

**REMARKABLE STORY FROM WOKING:
MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM MARS**

It was a hot afternoon. The fire in the heather had been put out, but the ground was black as far as one could see. The pit was still giving off smoke. A peddler at the scene was selling green apples and ginger beer.

Toward the edge of the pit, I found Ogilvy and some other men. One was a government official—the Astronomer Royal. He was giving directions in a high-pitched voice. Ogilvy told me that a faint sound was still coming from within the cylinder.

Just then the Astronomer Royal shouted, “Keep back! *Keep back!*”

“It’s a-movin’,” one of boys cried out. “I don’t like it! I’m a-goin’ home, I am!”

People began elbowing and jostling as a strange humming sound came from the pit.

“I say!” Ogilvy cried. “Keep back! We don’t know what’s inside the confounded thing!”

Then a young man, a shop assistant from Woking, was standing on the cylinder. The crowd had pushed him into the pit!

Now we could clearly see that the end of the cylinder was being unscrewed from within. Finally, the lid of the cylinder popped off. It fell on the gravel with a ringing sound.

I think everyone expected to see a man come out. I know I did. Possibly, it would be somewhat unlike us—but in all basic ways a man. Then I saw something moving within the shadow. It was two bright disks, like eyes. Next, an object that looked like a little gray snake, about the thickness of a walking stick, coiled up out of the middle. It wriggled in the air toward me. Then came another!

A chill came over me. A woman shrieked. More tentacles were now wriggling out of the cylinder. Surprise gave way to horror on the



faces of the people about me. Some of them ran off. I stood staring, gripped with terror.

A big grayish bulk, about the size of a bear, was slowly and painfully rising out of the cylinder. It glistened like wet leather. Two large, dark-colored eyes stared at me. The mass that framed them, the head of the thing, was round. The mouth just under the eyes quivered and panted and drooled. The whole creature pulsed! One of its long, thin tentacles gripped the edge of the cylinder. Another swayed in the air.

Those who have never seen a living Martian can scarcely imagine the horror of its appearance. The quivering, V-shaped mouth with its pointed upper lip was as strange as its groups of tentacles. Due to the greater gravity of Earth, its movements were heavy and painful. The creature's huge eyes were inhuman—monstrous, really! The oily brown skin was unspeakably nasty. Even at my first glimpse, I was nearly overcome with disgust and dread.

Then a second of these creatures appeared in the deep shadow of the opening. I turned and ran away madly, looking behind me. It seemed that I could not turn my face from these things! Then I saw a faint black object in the pit. It was the shopman who had fallen in. As I watched, he suddenly vanished! I fancied I heard a faint shriek. No doubt I should have gone back to help him, but my fears froze me. I just stood there, knee-deep in the heather, staring at the mound. My heart was a battleground of fear and curiosity.

3 **The Heat Ray**

Afraid to go back to the edge of the pit, I began walking around it. Soon a leash of thick black whips, like the arms of an octopus, flashed out of the pit. Then they quickly withdrew. Next, a thin rod rose up. A round, spinning disk was at the end. I was fascinated. What could be going on there?

Most of the crowd stood in little groups.

“What ugly brutes!” one man cried out.
“Good God! What ugly brutes!”

The sunset had faded to twilight before anything further happened. Then I noticed a little knot of men moving toward the pit. The man in front waved a white flag. Apparently, the group had decided that the Martians were intelligent. They were signaling to show that we were intelligent, too.

The flag fluttered in the breeze. I was too

far away to recognize the men. Later, I learned that Ogilvy and the Astronomer Royal were among them.

Suddenly there was a bright flash of light. Glowing, greenish smoke came out of the pit in three puffs. At the same time, a hissing sound was heard. Then a humped shape slowly rose out of the pit and a beam of light seemed to flicker from it. Suddenly, flashes of actual flame sprang toward the group of men! As I watched in horror, a bright glare leaped from one man to another. It was as if they had suddenly turned to fire!

Then, by the light of their own ruin, I watched the men fall. I stood staring, not yet realizing that *death* was leaping from man to man! As the shaft of heat passed over them, the pine trees behind them burst into fire. Every dry bush became a mass of flames. I saw this blazing death coming toward me by the burning bushes it touched. But I was too amazed to move! Then the hissing suddenly ceased, and the black, domelike object sank slowly into the pit.

It all had happened so fast! Had that death

swept the full circle, it would have slain me too. But for some reason I was spared. Now the night about me seemed very dark and unfamiliar. The little group of black specks with the white flag had been swept out of existence! Then it came to me: *I was helpless, unprotected, and alone.*

Breathless with terror, I turned and stumbled through the heather. The fright I felt was a panic—not only of Martians, but of the stillness about me. I ran weeping, as a child might do.

How could the Martians slay humans so swiftly and silently? It's certain that a beam of heat is at work. Whatever can burn flashes into fire at its touch. Lead runs like water. Glass melts. Water explodes into steam. That night, nearly 40 people lay about the starlit pit. All were charred beyond recognition.

News of the massacre probably reached the towns of Cobham, Woking, and Ottershaw about the same time.

"They're coming!" a woman on the road shrieked at me.

The deadly heat ray had stopped very near

Cobham Road. Travelers had heard the whistling noise and seen the fire lighting the tops of the trees. They had watched windows smashing and window frames burning. Two women and a little boy were crushed and trampled on the road. They were left to die amid the terror and the darkness.

I remember little of my flight. I must have run until I fell. It seems that I remained on the ground for some time. When I sat up, my fear had strangely fallen from me like a coat. I even asked myself if these things had really happened. I couldn't believe it!

My mind was a blank wonder as I rose and walked on. My muscles and nerves seemed drained of their strength.

I am a man of many moods, I think. At times I have often felt a strange sense of separation from the world about me. I seem to watch it all from the outside. This feeling was strong upon me that night.

Finally reaching home, I startled my wife, so worn-looking was I. I went into the dining room and sat down. Then I told her of the things I had seen. The dinner my good wife

had set out remained neglected on the table while I told my story.

“There is one good thing,” I said to calm her fears. “Those things are really sluggish! Perhaps they’ll keep the pit and kill anyone who comes near them. But I don’t think they can get out of it.”

To comfort me, my wife reached out and put her hand on mine.

“Poor Ogilvy!” I went on. “To think he may be lying dead there!”

My wife was frightened. “What if they come this way?” she asked in a trembling voice. Her face was deadly white.

I tried to soothe her and myself. “But they can scarcely move,” I said, stressing the problem they faced with gravity. On the surface of the Earth, the force of gravity is three times what it is on the surface of Mars, I explained. A Martian, therefore, would weigh three times more on Earth than on Mars. His body would be like lead to him.

The newspaper reports seemed to agree with me. But they overlooked some other facts—just as I did. The atmosphere of the

Earth contains far more oxygen than Mars. This gives the Martians extra energy to deal with their greatly increased weight. And the Martians' intelligence was also overlooked.

But these thoughts had not occurred to me. As I ate dinner, my confidence grew. I began to feel brave and secure.

"They've done a foolish thing," I said. "No doubt they're dangerous because they're mad with terror. Perhaps they thought they'd find no living things here. Certainly they expected no *intelligent* living things!

"A shell in the pit!" I scoffed. "If worse comes to the worst, a shell in the pit will kill them."

Even now I well remember that dinner. I can still see my dear wife's sweet, anxious face peering at me. I can see the white tablecloth, the silver tableware. In those days, even writers had many fine things.

I did not know the truth. That was the last civilized dinner I was to eat for many strange and terrible days.

S4 Friday Night

Of all the strange things that happened that Friday, one thought stands out in my mind. This was the way that commonplace activities continued!

Imagine a five-mile-wide circle drawn around the Woking sand pits. I doubt that one human being outside that circle was at all affected by the newcomers. Unless they knew someone lying dead near the pit, people's habits and emotions were not at all changed by the Martians' arrival. Many people had heard of the cylinder, of course. They all talked about it. But it caused less excitement than an attack by Germany might have.

Even *within* the five-mile circle, most people were unmoved. All over the district, ordinary people were eating their ordinary dinners. Workmen were peacefully gardening

after a day's labors in the factories. Children were being put to bed. Young lovers wandered through the lanes. Students were still bent over their books.

Maybe there was a murmur in the village streets now and then. Here and there a messenger caused a whirl of excitement. But for the most part, the daily routines of life went on as they had for countless years. It was as though no planet named Mars existed in the sky! Even at nearby Woking and Horsell and Cobham, that was the case. Everything went on in a most ordinary way.

Trains were running through Woking according to schedule. A boy from the town was selling papers with the afternoon's news. The steady rumble of train engines mingled with his shouts of "Men from Mars!" His cries caused little more notice than a drunkard's babbling. The weary railway passengers rattling toward London peered out the windows into the darkness. If they saw a rare, flickering spark dance up, they thought it was nothing more serious than a heath fire.

One or two souls, looking for adventure,

went out into the darkness that night. They crawled quite near the Martians—and never returned. Now and again a light ray, like the beam of a warship's searchlight, swept the area. Then the heat ray followed. Except for that, the area was silent and empty. The charred bodies lay there under the stars, all night and all the next day. The sounds of hammering from the pit were heard by almost no one.

That was the state of things on Friday night. The cylinder was sticking into the skin of our old planet Earth like a poisoned dart. But the poison was scarcely working yet. In the rest of the world, the stream of life still flowed. The fever of war had yet to develop.

All night long the Martians went on hammering. Their work on their machines was tireless. Now and again a puff of greenish-white smoke whirled up to the starlit sky. But no one was there to see it.

About 11, a company of soldiers came through Horsell. Some time later, a second company marched through Cobham. They decided to camp around the pit.

A few seconds after midnight a crowd of people in Woking saw a star fall from heaven. It seemed to land in the pine woods to the northwest. Some people remarked that the greenish shower caused a silent brightness like summer lightning.

This was the second cylinder.

5 **The Fighting Begins**

Saturday lives in my memory as a day of suspense. The morning air was hot and close. I had slept little and risen early. For a while, I stood in the garden, listening. There was nothing stirring but a lark.

The milkman came as usual. He told me that the Martians had been surrounded by troops during the night.

“I hear they aren’t to be killed,” said the milkman, “if that can be avoided.”

I chatted with my neighbor. “It’s a pity they’re so unfriendly,” he said. “I’d be curious to know how they survive on another planet. We might learn a thing or two.”

The morning papers gave only a very inaccurate description of the killing of Ogilvy and the others. But there was a little news I did not know. The Martians had not shown

themselves again. They seemed busy in their pit. The constant sound of hammering and a steady stream of smoke were noted. It seemed the Martians were getting ready for a struggle. “Fresh attempts have been made to signal the creatures, but without success,” the report stated. The Martians weren’t worried. They seemed to take as much notice of our advances as we would of the lowing of a cow.

I must admit that all the soldiers and arms seemed to excite me. Something of my schoolboy dreams of battle and heroism came back. Again, I defeated the invaders in my imagination! At that time, it hardly seemed a fair fight. Surely the Martians were quite helpless, trapped in that pit of theirs.

About six that evening, as I sat at tea with my wife, I heard gunshots from the common. Close on the heels of that sound came a crash—quite close to us! It shook the ground. Running to the lawn, I saw the treetops bursting into smoky red flame! Then I watched as the tower of our little church slid down into ruin. Next, I heard one of our chimneys crack! A jagged piece of clay came

clattering down and broke into hundreds of small, sharp pieces.

My wife and I were in shock. Then I realized that the crest of Maybury Hill must be within range of the Martians' heat ray!

I led my wife toward the road. "We can't stay here," I said.

My wife stared at me. "But where are we to go?" she cried out in terror.

I remembered her cousins in Leatherhead.

"Leatherhead!" I shouted. "Stay here!" Then I ran to find a means of travel.

Returning with a horse and cart, I loaded up our servant and a box of goods. I jumped up into the driver's seat beside my wife and flicked the reins. In another moment we were clear of the smoke.

The road was dotted with people. Through the hot, quiet air, we could still hear the faint whir of a machine gun and the occasional cracking of rifle shots. But these sounds were quickly stilled. Apparently, the Martians were setting fire to everything within range of their heat ray.

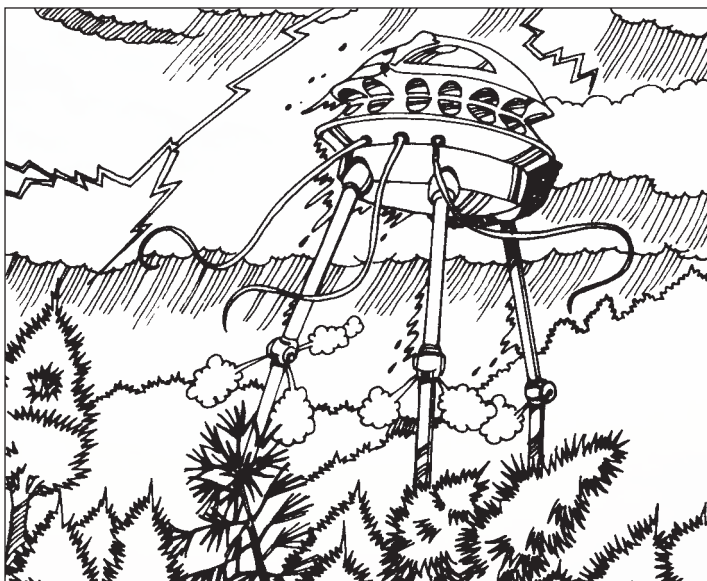
Leatherhead is about 12 miles from our

home at Maybury Hill. We got there about nine o'clock. While the horse had an hour's rest, I took supper with my cousins. Then I left my wife to their care. Speaking calmly, I pointed out that the Martians were tied to the pit by their heaviness. My wife spoke little. If I hadn't promised to return the horse and cart, I would have stayed with her in Leatherhead. *Oh, would that I had!* My wife's face, I remember, was very white as we parted.

For my own part, I was not sorry to return to Maybury that night. Something like war fever had somehow gotten into my blood. I can only say that I wanted to be present at the death of the Martians!

It was nearly 11 o'clock when I started for Maybury. As I traveled, I noticed a blood-red glow on the horizon. Then a green glare lit the road about me and the distant woods. It seemed that gathering storm clouds had been pierced by a thread of green fire. It was the third falling star! My horse bolted and ran.

Just then I saw a huge object moving rapidly down the slope of Maybury Hill. At first I mistook it for the wet roof of a house.



Then, in a flash of lightning, the object stood out clear and sharp and bright.

And this *thing* I saw—how can I describe it? It was a monstrous tripod, taller than many houses. It came striding over the pine trees, shoving them aside. Then this walking engine of glittering metal rolled across the heather. I could see ropes of steel dangling from it. Next, the clattering of its passage mingled with thunder. Can you picture a giant milking stool tilting violently along the ground? This was the image I got. But instead of a milking

stool, imagine a great body of machinery on top of a three-legged stand.

Somehow my runaway horse and I were galloping hard to meet it! Then I sighted a second monster and lost all my nerve. When I pulled the horse's head round to the right, the cart tipped over on top of the horse. Flung sideways, I fell into a shallow pool of water. In another moment or two, the giant, rumbling machine went striding by me and hurried on its way uphill.

Seen close up, the *thing* was incredibly strange. Moving with a ringing, metallic sound, it swung its long, flexible tentacles to and fro. Its hood also moved to and fro like a head looking about. Behind the main body I could see a giant mass of white metal that looked like a huge fisherman's basket. As the monster swept by me, puffs of green smoke billowed out of its leg joints.

As it departed, the *thing* set up a howl that drowned out the thunder. "*Aloo! Aloo!*" it cried. In another minute, I could see two more just like it half a mile away. I watched them pause and stoop over something in the

field. I have no doubt it was the third cylinder they had fired at us from Mars.

For some minutes I lay there in the rain and darkness. When the lightning flashed, I could see the metal monsters moving about in the distance. By the time I could finally move, I thought of going back to my own house. For a while, I staggered along in that direction, splashing in storm water. Along the way I passed dead bodies and saw a red glare in the smoke-filled sky. But near my home, the houses seemed mostly unharmed. I let myself into my house with my latch-key. Then I closed, locked, and bolted the door. All I could think of were those striding, metal monsters and the dead bodies I'd seen. For a long time I crouched at the foot of my stairs with my back to the wall. My whole body was shivering hard.

Finally, I went upstairs to my study. I began to wonder about the metal monsters I had seen. Were they intelligent machines? But, surely, no such thing was possible! Did a Martian sit within each machine? Did the Martian rule and direct its course, much as a

man's human brain rules over his body?

I sat in my study all day, looking out the window. In one night, the countryside had become a valley of ashes. The first light of dawn revealed the ruins of shattered houses and blackened trees.

Curiosity overcame me. I crept to the pit. There, shining in the morning light, three of the metal giants stood about the hole. Their hoods turned as though they were viewing the destruction they had made. It seemed to me that the pit was bigger now. Now and again, puffs of green gas streamed out of the pit. Beyond, the fires burned.

My plan now was to return at once to Leatherhead. The strength of the Martians had convinced me to take my wife out of the country. All the land around London was too dangerous. The whole countryside was sure to see a terrible struggle before these creatures could be destroyed!

Between my house and Leatherhead, however, lay the third cylinder with its guarding giants.

6 **What I Saw of Destruction**

The roads were crowded with excited, noisy people. Many panted under heavy loads as they walked along. There was a lot of shouting, and even a little joking. Some people seemed to think the Martians were simply fierce human beings. They believed that the Martians might attack, but would surely be destroyed in the end.

A gunshot rang out. “What’s that?” one man cried. Again came a muffled thud, the sound of a gun. The fighting was beginning.

“The soldiers will stop ’em,” a woman beside me said. But her voice sounded unsure.

Then we saw a sudden rush of smoke rise up from the river. The ground shook.

“Here they are!” one man shouted. “D’yer see ’em comin’? Look yonder!”

Quickly, one after the other—one, two,

three, four of the armored Martians appeared! They strode across the meadows with a rolling motion. Then a fifth appeared. Their metal bodies glittered in the sunshine as they swept forward toward the river. One raised a huge case of some kind high in the air. It was the terrible heat ray I had seen on Friday night!

Now the crowd was horror-struck. Just the sight of these strange, swift, and terrible creatures was ghastly! For a moment everyone was too frightened to scream. But then they started to run.

The awesome power of the terrible heat ray was still quite fresh in my mind.

“Everyone get underwater!” I shouted to those around me.

I rushed right to the beach. My heart was beating fast. As a Martian approached, other people did the same. Then, as the Martian towered over me, I quickly flung myself under the water.

When I raised my head for air, I saw the Martian wading through the water. Then I heard six guns, hidden on the other bank, suddenly fire at once. One shell burst clean in

the face of the *thing*! The Martian's hood whirled off in fragments of soft red flesh and hard glittering metal.

"*Hit!*" I shouted, with something between a scream and a cheer.

People in the water about me all started shouting, too.

The headless giant reeled—but it didn't fall over. It was clear to me that the living creature inside was slain. The *thing* was now just a mass of metal, whirling to destruction. It plowed along in a straight line and crashed into the tower of the Shepperton Church. Then, with great force, it fell into the river.

An explosion shook the air. A spout of water, steam, mud, and shattered metal shot up into the sky. As the heat ray went off, a wave of hot water moved across the river.

When I looked back, I saw the other Martians moving down the riverbank with giant strides. The guns on the riverbank fired again—this time uselessly.

I quickly ducked underwater again and held my breath until it hurt. I could feel the water about me growing hotter. When I raised

my head to take a breath, I saw Martians holding their heat rays high. Hissing beams shot out this way and that. The sound was deafening! It was a combination of the clanking of the Martians' armor, the crash of falling houses, and the crackling of fire.

Then suddenly, the white flashes of a heat ray came toward me. A huge wave, heated nearly to the boiling point, came rushing upon me. I screamed. Scalded and half-blinded, I staggered toward shore through the leaping, hissing water. I now expected nothing but death.

I still have a dim memory of a Martian's foot coming down within yards of my head! But I realized that, by some sort of miracle, I had escaped.

Cylinder followed cylinder over the next 24 hours. New fighters were arriving from the red planet. Behind me, the armored Martians were preparing for a new attack. In front of me, humans were gathering for battle. Meanwhile, I made my way toward London through the fire and smoke.

Luckily, I found a small boat to help me

escape the destruction. Since there were no oars, I paddled as best I could with my burned hands. At last, I landed and lay down, deadly sick, amid the long grass. I do not clearly remember the arrival of the curate. I only know that I slowly became aware of a churchman sitting near me. He wore a soot-covered shirt. His clean-shaven face was turned upward as he stared at the sky. When I sat up, he looked down at me.

“Do you have any water?” I asked.

He shook his head sadly. “You’ve been asking for water for the last hour,” he said. Then he looked at the sky again.

“What does it mean?” he asked. “What *are* these Martians?”

He began waving his hands. “Everything is gone! Everything destroyed. The church! We rebuilt it only three years ago. Gone! *Why?*”

I could see that the curate had been driven to the very edge of a breakdown.

“Everything has changed,” I said quietly. “But you must keep your head, sir. Surely there is still hope.”

“This must be the beginning of the end!”

the curate cried out hopelessly.

I struggled to my feet and laid a hand on his shoulder. "Be a man!" I said. Then I told him about the monster I had seen killed.

As I was talking, he lifted his head. "Listen!" he cried out.

From beyond the hills across the water came the thud of distant guns and a weird crying sound. Then everything was still. High in the west the crescent moon hung faint and pale above the smoke.

"We'd better follow this path," I said. "It leads northward."

S7

London

My younger brother was in London when the Martians landed. He was a medical student, studying for an upcoming test. Until Saturday morning, he had heard nothing of the Martians' arrival.

The London papers had detailed articles on the planet Mars. They also ran a brief news story. It said the Martians had been frightened by the approach of a crowd. It was true that they had killed a number of people with a quick-firing gun. But according to the story, the Martians were still trapped in their pit by the force of gravity.

On Saturday evening, however, more news had reached the city.

LONDON IN DANGER! the headlines shouted. It was then, and then only, that my brother realized the power and terror of these

monsters. Now he read that the Martians were not merely a handful of sluggish creatures. They were intelligent minds powering huge mechanical bodies.

Martians are vast spiderlike machines, the papers reported. Each one of them is nearly 100 feet tall, fast as an express train, and able to shoot a beam of intense heat.

But the tone of the stories was hopeful. One monster had been destroyed, they reported. The rest had retreated to their cylinders. Soldiers and guns were moving into position. Never before had there been such a huge massing of English military might!

The reports warned that the situation was grave. But the public was advised to avoid panic. At the outside, it was thought there could be no more than 20 Martians against millions of Englishmen.

Hundreds of people were flowing into London now. Some of the refugees were describing what they had seen. "Boilers on stilts, I tell you—striding along like men!"

My brother was horrified. He tried to picture "boilers on stilts" 100 feet tall. He

read and reread the papers, fearing the worst had happened to me. He was sleeping in his attic room when he heard the shouting.

“*They’re coming!*” shouted a policeman on the street. “The Martians are coming!”

Doors opened wide. Window after window glowed yellow as people hastily dressed and hurried outside. Now fear itself seemed to be blowing through the streets! All of London was awakened. In the small hours of Monday morning, a vivid sense of danger was everywhere.

In the pink, early dawn, my brother went into the streets. Everywhere he looked, people were flying by on foot and in vehicles. “Black smoke!” he heard them shouting. “Get away from the black smoke!”

One man was moving along with the rest, selling papers as he ran. My brother thought it was an odd mixing of profit and panic. He bought a paper and read the words of the Commander-in-Chief:

The Martians are using rockets to fire great clouds of a black and poisonous vapor into the air. It seems impossible to stop them. Beware!

There is no safety from the black smoke.

That was all—but it was enough. Most of London's six million residents were on the run. They all poured northward.

"Black smoke!" the voices cried. "Fire!"

Church bells jangled. Horse carts tipped, the drivers shrieking angrily. Overhead the dawn grew brighter, steady and calm.

By midday the Martians were nearing London. A cloud of black vapor was now floating across the land. Can you imagine the roaring wave of fear that swept through the greatest city in the world? In their haste to get away, London's citizens were fighting for seats on trains. They were being trampled and crushed in the streets.

My brother spotted two women in a carriage being attacked by robbers. He came to their aid. With the help of a revolver provided by one of the women, he was able to chase the thieves away. The grateful women offered him a ride.

Never before in the history of the world had such a mass of human beings moved together as a group. It was like a terrible,

gigantic stampede—without order of any kind. Everyone thought it was the beginning of the end of civilization—the final massacre of mankind!

Some people were forced to remain in London through Monday morning. Many who did died at home, choked by the black smoke.

When the fourth, fifth, and sixth cylinders fell, my brother saw the green flashes beyond the hills. The Tuesday newspaper reported that the invading Martians now held the whole of London!

On Wednesday, my brother and the two women he had befriended finally reached the sea. Just a few miles out lay an ironclad. This vessel, the *Thunder Child*, was the only warship in sight.

My brother managed to buy passage for them on a little steamboat. Their steamer was already moving out to sea when a Martian appeared. In the distance, he seemed small and faint as he moved along the muddy coast. But he wasn't small. Higher than the trees and church towers, the towering Martian kept

advancing in a human-like stride.

It was the first Martian my brother had seen. He stood, more amazed than terrified, watching this giant wade into the water. Then, in the distance, he could see another. Still farther off, yet another Martian came into view. All of them were marching toward the sea.

A cheer went up from the people on the little steamer. Driving full speed toward the Martians, the warship *Thunder Child* was steaming to the rescue!

Suddenly, the closest Martian lowered his tube. He fired a canister of the black gas at the ironclad. Another Martian raised his heat ray. He pointed it downward, causing a bank of steam to rise from the water. It drove through the iron of the ship's side like a white-hot iron rod through paper!

When the *Thunder Child's* guns fired, one Martian reeled and fell. The steamer passengers cheered as the *Thunder Child* headed for a second Martian. The warship was within 100 yards of him when the heat ray struck. The *Thunder Child* instantly burst

into flames! But the burning wreckage still drove forward. When it plowed into the Martian, he crumpled like cardboard.

“*Two!*” yelled the steamboat captain. Now everyone was shouting in excitement.

The little ship continued moving out to sea. The coastline grew faint as the sun sank behind gray clouds. It was twilight when the captain cried out in alarm and pointed. My brother strained his eyes. *Something* was rushing up into the sky! Indeed, something flat, broad, and very large was sweeping around in a vast curve. And as it flew, it rained down darkness upon the land.

BOOK 2
THE EARTH UNDER THE MARTIANS

 8 **What We Saw
from the
Ruined House**

Forgive me. I see that, in the first book, I wandered from my own adventures to those of my brother. All that while, the curate and I have been lurking in an empty house. We were hiding there to escape the black smoke.

I had been worrying about my wife. I was sure she was in Leatherhead, terrified and in danger. She must be mourning me as a dead man. When the smoke finally cleared, I told the curate we must set out again. I was determined to make my way to Leatherhead.

The curate was too frightened to go on. "But we are safe *here!*" he exclaimed.

When I said that I was going with him or

without him, he decided to join me.

Dead bodies lay twisted along the road. There were horses as well as men, all thickly covered with black dust! It soon became clear that Martians were all about us. Across a meadow, we saw one fighting-machine. Four or five little black figures hurried along before it. In three quick strides, the Martian was among them. He used no heat ray, but plucked them up one by one. Then he tossed them into the great metal carrier that hung behind him like a workman's basket.

It was then I realized that the Martians had a purpose other than the destruction of humanity. The curate and I stood frozen for a moment. Then we turned and fled.

When the curate began to complain of faintness and thirst, we entered a white house within a walled garden. We found food in its pantry. There were two loaves of bread, an uncooked steak, and half a ham. I list these things because we would have to live upon this store for the next two weeks. Bottled beer stood under a shelf. There were two bags of green beans and some limp lettuces. In a



cupboard, we found a dozen bottles of wine, some tinned soups and salmon, and two small tins of biscuits.

We sat in the dark kitchen, for we dared not strike a light. We were eating bread and ham when the disaster happened that was to imprison us there.

First there came a sudden blinding glare of bright green light. It was soon followed by an explosion such as I have never heard before or since. With a crash of glass and the rattle of falling bricks, the ceiling came down upon us!

I was knocked to the floor. When I came to, we were in total darkness. For a moment, I could not recall what had happened.

“Don’t move!” the curate whispered. “Any movement will make a noise—and I fancy they are just outside!”

We both stayed silent. Just outside was a metallic rattle. For three or four hours, until the dawn came, we scarcely moved.

At dawn, it became clear that the greater part of the house had collapsed. Through a jagged gap in the wall, we could see a towering Martian. It was clear that he was standing guard over a still-glowing cylinder.

“The fifth cylinder,” I whispered. “The fifth shot from Mars has struck this house. We are buried under the ruins!”

I heard the curate whimpering. Except for that sound, we lay still. I scarcely dared to breathe. From outside, I could hear a metallic humming. Then came a violent hooting, and then a hissing. For many hours we crouched there. At last we finally slept.

When I awoke, I was alone. The curate was across the room, lying against a triangle-

shaped hole that allowed him to look up at the Martians. When I touched his leg, he jumped back. Then I raised myself to the peephole in the wall. Outside I could see the clear blue of a peaceful evening sky and a tree touched with gold.

The cylinder lay nearby, in a deep pit. It was much larger than the first pit I had seen. I was now quite certain that our house had collapsed from the force of the landing. By chance, the kitchen alone had escaped. But now it stood buried under soil and ruins. We were hanging on the very edge of the pit. On the other side of the pit, one of the great fighting machines stood stiff and tall against the evening sky.

Then another kind of machine caught my attention. It looked something like a metal spider! Its many jointed tentacles reached out and clutched at things as it moved, crab-like, about its work. The Martian who controlled it was clearly its brain.

Then I began to study the Martians themselves. I saw now that they were huge round bodies—or, rather heads—about four

feet around. Each head had a face with no nostrils. Indeed, the Martians do not seem to have had any sense of smell. Just beneath its very large, dark-colored eyes was a kind of fleshy beak. The back of this head—or body—was a tightly stretched surface that seemed to serve as an ear.

Sixteen slender, almost whiplike tentacles were grouped around the mouth. These were arranged in two bunches of eight each. They seemed to work like hands. The Martians appeared to be trying to raise themselves up, but were being held down by gravity.

Some time later, the Martians would be studied and dissected. We would learn that the greater part of the body was the brain. Next in size were the bulky lungs, the heart, and the vessels. This was the sum of the Martian organs. They were heads—merely heads! They did not eat. Instead, they took the fresh, living blood of other creatures and shot it into their own veins. I cannot describe the horror of it. It is enough to say that the blood from a still living animal—in most cases, from a human being—ran through a bit

of tubing into the Martian's body.

This idea is disgusting to us. But, just imagine how horrible our meat-eating habits would seem to an intelligent rabbit!

In other ways, the Martian body was also very different from ours. They did not sleep, anymore than the heart of man sleeps. Also, the Martians were without sex. We know this because a young Martian was born on Earth during the war. It was found attached to its parent. It was actually budding off—just as young lilies bud off of the parent plant.

And for some reason, Martians harbor no germs. Either the diseases on Earth have never appeared on Mars or else Martian science had gotten rid of them.

I may also here describe the strange red weed. It seems that the plants on Mars—instead of being green—are a vivid blood-red. Seeds that the Martians brought with them to Earth (on purpose or by accident) soon gave rise to all kinds of red-colored growths.

For some time, I observed the Martians closely. No surviving human being saw so much of them in action as I did. I noted that

their hooting noises came only before feeding. And these sounds did not seem to be a way of talking, but a breathing out of air as they prepared to take in blood. I came to believe that the Martians did not talk aloud. In a way we don't understand, they shared their thoughts without sound.

The creatures need their metal machines to make them superior to human beings. They, themselves, have become mere brains. They wear no clothing. Instead, they wear different bodies according to their needs—just as you and I might take a bicycle for travel or an umbrella in the rain!

Allow me to point out one more curious fact. The wheel was not among the things the Martians brought to Earth. Instead, their machines moved with animal-like motions. This cleverly made the metal seem more alive than the sluggish Martians themselves.

9 **The Death of the Curate**

The curate and I were of very different natures. I began to hate his constant weeping. To me, he seemed like a spoiled child who thought his tears would get him something. He ate more than I did. I pointed out that our only chance was to stay in the house until the Martians left the pit. Our food *must* last until then. Yet still he ate heavily and often.

I ran out of patience as the days wore on. Eventually, his carelessness made me turn to threats—and at last to blows.

Those who have not faced the dark and terrible sides of life may criticize me. But those who have been under the shadow—who have had to struggle for life—will understand.

And so we struggled to survive in our dark, dim world of whispers, snatched food, and blows. Meanwhile, in the cruel sunlight of

that terrible June, the Martians continued their work in the pit. There was nothing for us to do but wait.

The curate was at the peephole when the first men were brought to the pit. He crept up beside me in the darkness, trembling and motioning wildly. I rose from my chair and climbed up to peek out of the hole.

It was twilight now. Bats were flying about, paying no notice to the action. I heard human voices. A fighting-machine towered over the scene. By squinting, I could see the oily gleam of the Martian inside the hood. I noticed the brightness of his eyes.

A terrified yell then pierced the air. I saw a long tentacle reaching over the machine's shoulder to the little cage on its back. Then something—something struggling violently—was lifted high against the sky. It was a man! He was a stout, well-dressed, middle-aged fellow. I could see the panic in his eyes. Then he vanished from my sight as the fighting-machine moved behind a mound. Soon I heard a terrible shriek followed by a long, cheerful hooting from the Martians.

I slid down from the peephole and clapped my hands over my ears.

That night, we sat silent in the kitchen. The curate seemed unable to speak. The idea of a Martian feeding on a human had robbed him of his reason. The man was now like a quivering animal.

As I saw it, our chief chance for escape would come when the Martians left their camp. I resolved to wait, expecting no help from the curate.

It was the next day that I saw a lad killed. It was the only time I actually *saw* the Martians feed. After that, I avoided the hole in the wall for the rest of the day.

I had given up any hope of our escape by way of human help. But on the fourth or fifth night I heard a sound like that made by heavy guns. I counted six distant shots. After that, another six. And that was all.

It was on the sixth day in prison that I peeped out for the last time. I turned from the hole to find the curate crouched in a far, dark corner. I heard him drinking. In the darkness, I reached out and snatched his bottle of wine.

For a few minutes, we struggled over it. Then the bottle struck the floor and broke. We stood panting and growling at each other. Something had to be done. In the end, I planted myself between him and the food. Then I divided the food into rations to last us ten days. I refused to let him eat any more that day.

For the next two days, we argued and wrestled. There were times when I kicked him. I even offered him some extra wine to leave the food alone. But neither force nor kindness helped. Slowly, I began to see that the poor man had gone mad.

On the eighth day, the curate began to talk loudly. He threatened that if I didn't give him more food, he would start shouting and bring the Martians upon us.

"Be still!" I begged.

"I have been still too long!" he cried, in a tone that must have reached the pit.

"Shut up!" I said, rising to my feet. I was terrified that the Martians would hear us!

"Nay! I *won't*!" the curate shouted at the top of his voice.

In three strides he was at the door.

I reached out my hand and touched a heavy meat chopper hanging on the wall. In a flash, I was after him. Thank heaven a small bit of humanity still remained in me! Just in time, I turned the sharp end of the cleaver away. Instead of slashing him, I hit him with the butt of the handle. He fell forward and lay stretched out on the ground.

I heard a smashing noise at that moment. Through the hole above me I saw the dark bulk of the spiderlike machine. One of its gripping limbs was feeling its way over the fallen beams! I stood frozen with fear. Then I saw the large, dark eyes of a Martian, trying to look inside. A moment later a tentacle came slowly poking through the hole like a long metal snake.

I stumbled over the curate, making my way to the door of the coal cellar. By now, the tentacle was twisting and turning two yards or more into the room. With a faint cry, I opened the cellar door and crouched there in the darkness. My whole body was shaking. Had the Martian seen me? What was it doing?



Something was moving to and fro in the kitchen. Then a heavy body—I knew only too well *whose*—was being dragged across the kitchen floor toward the opening. I couldn't stand it. I crept toward the door and peeped into the kitchen. Then I saw, in the triangle of light coming through the hole, the Martian's eyes examining the curate's head.

I crept back to the cellar and shut the door. As much as I could, I covered myself up with firewood and coal.

Then I heard something working at the

latch. The Martian had found the door!

The door opened slowly. In the darkness I could see something like an elephant's trunk, waving toward me. It reached out and touched the walls, the coals, the wood, and the ceiling. It looked like a fat black worm swaying its blind head to and fro. Once, it even touched the heel of my boot. I nearly screamed. For a minute, I thought it had me! But then, taking a lump of coal to examine, it drew back out of the cellar.

I heard it go into the kitchen. The biscuit tins rattled. A bottle smashed. Then came a silence that seemed to last forever.

Had it gone?

At last I decided that it had.

It came into the kitchen no more. Still, I lay all the tenth day in darkness, buried among the coals. I dared not even crawl out for a drink of water. It was the dawn of the eleventh day before I left my hiding place.

10 **The Stillness**

Finally, I crept into the kitchen. Every scrap of food was gone! Apparently, the Martian had taken it all.

I took no food or drink on the eleventh or twelfth day. There was none to be had. My strength slowly faded. I heard no noises from the pit, but I didn't feel strong enough to crawl to the peephole. On the twelfth day, my throat became painfully parched. I went to the pump by the sink and drank some blackened rain water. No tentacle followed the noise of my pumping.

On the thirteenth day I drank more water. Whenever I slept, I dreamt either of the curate's death or of fine dinners. When I awoke, I noticed that the light coming through the hole had turned red. To my confused mind, it looked exactly like the

color of blood! On the fourteenth day I could see what had happened. The red weeds had nearly covered up the hole in the wall!

On the fifteenth day, I heard a noise. A dog's black nose was poking through the red weeds growing over the hole! I called out to the animal, but he ran away. After that, I listened—and the pit was still! Finally, I went to the peephole, pushed the red weeds aside, and dared to look out.

I saw some crows fighting over human skeletons! These birds were the only living things in the pit. I could hardly believe my eyes. All the machines were gone! The place was now just a round, empty pit in the sand.

Slowly, I pushed myself through the red weeds. I stood at the edge of the pit and looked about. At last my chance of escape had come! I started to tremble.

When I'd last seen this region, it had been a street of comfortable houses and shady trees. Now the houses were all wrecked. Rampant red weed grew over the roofless rooms. I saw a skinny cat slink along a wall—but there were no traces of any humans.

After so long indoors, the day seemed very bright. I felt like a rabbit coming out of its burrow. I had a despairing feeling that I was indeed an animal, and that the Martians were my masters. Had we humans been left behind only to lurk and watch, to run and hide?

I spotted a patch of garden nearby. Chased by my hunger, I moved away from the pit and ate some young onions and carrots. It was time to get moving. So I traveled on with two main goals: to find more food and to get as far as possible from that horrible pit.

As I walked on, the scene became more familiar. In some patches, it looked like a cyclone had hit. But other places seemed perfectly calm and ordinary. Blinds were drawn and doors closed in all the houses. It was as if the owners were sleeping within or had gone out for the day.

Still, I saw no human beings—nor any sign of Martians. I looked down the hill to the river. It was clogged with red weed. Over all, there was silence. It made me uneasy to remember how swiftly the change had come.

For a time I believed I was completely

alone. The Martians, I thought, must have finally finished off mankind in this part of the world. Perhaps they had left the country to seek food elsewhere. It was not unlikely that even now they were destroying Berlin or Paris.

I decided to keep going toward London. There, it seemed to me, I had the best chance to learn what was happening.

As I neared the city, I saw that red weed had nearly choked the roadway. The leaves of the weeds, however, were marked by odd white patches. But what did that mean? Could it be that a spreading disease was killing the red plants?

The coating of black dust along the road grew thicker as I entered the city. The streets were horribly quiet. Before long I came across several dead bodies. All of them were covered with the black powder.

The farther I went into London, the stranger the stillness seemed. To me, it was not so much the stillness of death. No, it was the stillness of suspense—of something dreadful yet to come.

It was then that I first heard the terrible

howling. It was a sobbing sound of only two notes: *ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla*. Great waves of these sobbing notes came sweeping down the roadway.

As I walked on, the mysterious howling filled me with loneliness. *Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla*.

Far away in the sunset, I saw the hood of a Martian fighting-machine. So this was the source of the howling! I watched for some time, but the fighting-machine didn't move. Strangely, the Martian inside appeared to be yelling for no particular reason.

I wasn't afraid. Perhaps I was simply too tired to be fearful. I kept moving forward.

Soon I came upon a wrecked machine lying across the road. At first I thought it was a fallen house. Then I saw that it was one of those spiderlike Martian machines. Its tentacles were smashed and twisted. In the darkness, I could not see the blood that smeared its seat. Neither could I see the gnawed gristle of the Martian left behind by a pack of hungry dogs.

As I crossed the bridge, the *ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla* sounds stopped abruptly. The silence

came as suddenly as a thunderclap. It was a stillness that could be felt.

Then I saw another Martian machine at the top of the next hill. It stood tall and motionless. At that moment an insane idea came over me. *I might as well end it right now*, I thought to myself. I marched toward the giant. But as I drew nearer, I saw a flock of blackbirds circling about the hood. My heart gave a bound! Now I started running up the hill toward the motionless monster. Long shreds of something—I could not tell what—were hanging out of its hood. The hungry birds pecked and tore at the brownish shreds.

I scrambled to the hilltop and looked down at the pit below me. Dead Martians were scattered all about! A dozen of them lay there, stark and silent. What had happened? Had they died of some disease or bacteria their systems couldn't fight off? How strange! It appeared that they were slain—just as the red weed was being slain. After all of man's mighty efforts had failed, the Martians had been conquered by the humblest things upon this Earth!

Such disease germs, of course, have killed humans since the beginning of time. But we have developed a resistance to many of them. On Mars, however, there are no bacteria. When the invaders arrived, they drank our water and ate our food. It was then that our germs began to overwhelm them! When Ogilvy and I first spied the Martians, they were already doomed. Earth, after all, belongs to human beings.

Dead Martians seemed to be everywhere. There were nearly 50 altogether. These things that had been so alive and so threatening were now all dead! My heart lightened as I stared into the pit.

Their death had not come a day too soon. Across the pit lay a great flying machine. It seemed clear that the Martians had been working on it.

I turned and looked down the slope of the hill. Two Martian machines stood like giant spiders. Each one was encircled by birds. These harmless tripods of shining metal now glittered in the brightness of the rising sun.

London—the great Mother of Cities—had

been saved by a miracle. I could scarcely believe that the shadow had been rolled back! Humans might still walk in the streets. This dear dead city of mine might once more be alive and powerful. Survivors would return. The pulse of life would grow stronger. All the blackened houses would soon ring with the hammers of builders!

At that thought, I extended my hands toward the sky in thanks to God. In just a year or so, everything would no doubt be just as it was!

I still had a future! Good thoughts of myself, my wife, and my old life flooded over me with overpowering force.

S11

Wreckage

And now comes the strangest part of my story. The last thing I remember clearly is standing on the edge of the pit and praising God. But after that—

Of the next three days I know nothing. I have learned since that I was not alone in London then. Other wanderers had already discovered the Martian overthrow. One man had sent a telegraph to Paris. The joyful news had flashed all over the world. Already, people who had gone abroad were boarding trains to return to London.

It seems that for those three days, I did nothing but wander the streets, weeping and raving. Some kindly people found me. Troubled as they were by their own problems, they reached out to help me. They say that I was singing, “The Last Man Left Alive!

Hurrah! The Last Man Left Alive!" These generous people took me in, and I told them my story.

Very gently—when my mind was clear again—they told me what they knew of Leatherhead. It had been destroyed, along with every soul in it, by a Martian. He had swept it away as a boy might crush an ant hill.

I was a heartbroken man, and they showed me great sympathy. I stayed with them four more days. Then I went into the streets again.

People were going about their business. It seemed incredible now that great numbers of my fellow humans had been slain! But I noticed how yellow people's skins were. And I saw the strangeness in their bright eyes. Most of their faces seemed to carry one of two expressions—either a leaping joyful energy, or a grim resolve.

London now seemed to be a city of tramps. Officers were handing out bread sent by the French government. The ribs of the few remaining horses stood out sharply. I saw nothing the Martians had left behind except some red weed climbing over a bridge.

Free trains were taking people to their homes. Boarding one, I watched the sunlit scenes of destruction flowing past the windows. Every stream was filled with red weed! The stuff looked like something between butcher's meat and pickled cabbage. I passed the heaped masses of earth around the sixth cylinder. A number of people were standing about it, talking. A British flag flapped cheerfully in the morning breeze.

I left the train and took the road to Maybury. I passed the spot where my broken cart lay among tangles of red weed. Then I saw the whitened bones of the horse. For some time, I stood staring at the scene.

Finally, I went on to my house. The door was unfastened. It slowly blew open as I neared and then slammed shut again. The curtains of my study fluttered out the open window. Scarcely a month had gone by. Now I remembered that I had gone down to the garden gate to buy a *Daily Chronicle*. It was then I heard the newsboy's odd story about "Men from Mars."

I went in to the dining room. Food was

rotting on the table. With a deep sigh, I let go of the faint hope I had held out for so long. But then an amazing thing happened.

“It’s no use,” said a man’s deep voice. “The house is empty. You can see with your own eyes that no one has been here. Do not torture yourself, my dear. No one escaped but you.”

I was startled. Had I spoken my thought aloud? I turned and saw that the French door was gaping open behind me. I took a step outside and looked around.

There, amazed and afraid—just as I was amazed and afraid—were my cousin and my wife! My dear wife was white and tearful. When she saw me, she gave out a faint cry.

“I came!” she said. “I knew! Somehow I *knew* you were alive!”

She put her hand to her throat and swayed. I stepped forward and caught her in my arms.

Epilogue

Now that I am ending my story, I am sorry so many questions are left unsettled.

At any rate, the bodies of the Martians were examined after the war. As I had suspected, only some common, earthly germs were found. A grand and almost complete Martian body is on display at the Natural History Museum right now. Many drawings have been made of it.

The make-up of the black smoke is still unknown. The power of the heat rays also remains a puzzle. Studies of the black powder reveal an unknown element that has a deadly effect upon the blood.

The most serious question, of course, is the possibility of another attack from the Martians. Personally, I do not think that enough attention is being given to this matter.

We should keep a constant watch upon the planet for any sign of another attack. May God protect us from such a thing! But if there is a “next time,” we should be prepared.

The cylinder might be destroyed with dynamite or gunfire before it cools enough for the Martians to emerge. Or, perhaps our troops could be ready to shoot them to death as soon as the screwtop opens. One thing at least is certain—the Martians have lost the advantage of surprise.

Some experts think the Martians may have landed on Venus. A strange, bright mark has been observed on the dark half of that planet.

Whether we expect another invasion or not, our views of the future must be changed by these events. We have learned that we cannot see our planet as a fenced-in, secure place for humankind. We simply cannot predict the unexpected good or evil that may suddenly come upon us from space.

In the larger picture, the dreadful invasion from Mars may turn out to have a good side! It has kept us from being too smug about our future. It has brought huge gifts to human

science. And it has inspired us to build more brotherhood among men.

Since the Martians' attack, our views of the world have broadened. Before the cylinder fell, there was the widespread certainty that no life existed beyond our little sphere. Now we see farther. If the Martians can reach Venus, such a voyage should be possible for earthly men as well.

Or it may be that the overthrow of the Martians is only temporary. Perhaps the future belongs to them—not to us.

I must say that the stress of these strange times has left me unsure. Sometimes, as I write by lamplight in my study, I suddenly picture the valley below in flames. The house about me suddenly feels empty and lonely. I see black powder darkening the silent streets. I see bodies, tattered and dog-bitten. And I often awake, cold and fearful, in the night.

From time to time, I go to London and mix with the busy crowds. Though all seems the same as ever, everything is different. It comes to my mind that all of these people are ghosts, haunting streets I have seen silent.

Even now it seems strange to stand on the hill and see people walking to and fro among the flowers. It is odd to watch sight-seers stroll about the Martian machine that still stands there. It is still unsettling to recall the time I saw the machine all bright, hard, and silent, in the dawn of that last great day.

Strangest of all is to hold my wife's hand and recall that we once counted each other among the dead.

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

H. G. WELLS

Victorian England is riding high. People are so prosperous and smug they imagine themselves the masters of the universe. Then the unthinkable happens: *England is attacked by Martians!* Panic erupts as the countryside goes up in flames. Is there no way to stop the ghastly, machinelike creatures and their deadly heat rays?

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